Almas still exists in Mongolia
Author(s): P. R. Rinčen
Source: *Genus*, Vol. 20, No. 1/4 (1964), pp. 186-192
Published by: Università degli Studi di Roma "La Sapienza"
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/29787582
Accessed: 04-11-2015 04:15 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Università degli Studi di Roma "La Sapienza" is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Genus*.

http://www.jstor.org

This content downloaded from 130.113.111.210 on Wed, 04 Nov 2015 04:15:38 UTC
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

P. R. RINCEN

Almas still exists in Mongolia

The Hairy Wild Men exist, in Mongolia from an immemorial time. We have in spoken and literary Mongolian the speciale terms for these Hairy Primitives. For example, in the south desert part of Mongolia these Subhumans were well known under the name of Almases. And old females were named Dzaguin emeguen - Old Women of Ammodendron Brushwood.

In the regions of the former habitations of Almases in Oburkhangai and Bayankhongor, provinces of the Mongolian People's Republic, the name Almas was taboo at the places frequented by them and one might name them only Akhai - i.e. Uncle-Brother for avoid unexpected encounter with these abominable and mysterious humanlike creatures.

In the toponymy of South-Western Mongolia there are many place-names connected with Almases: Almasyn Dobo - the Hills of Almases, Almasyn Ulan Oula - the Red Mountains of Almases, Almasyn Ulan Khada - the Red Rocks of Almases, etc.

The origin of this old name is quite unknown for us, Mongolists, and it does not lend itself for translation in other languages. But wè can recognize its variations in Turkish languages: Almasty, Albasty etc.

It should be noted that the tentative to explain and translate this name given in a very interesting book of Dr. I. T. Sanderson is absolutely inacceptable from the point of view of the Mongolian philology (1).

In shamanist mythology of Mongol Darkhats in Kossogol region of the North-Western Mongolia there is a deity named

(1) I. T. SANDERSON. *Abominable Snowmen: Legend come to Life.* Philadelphia and New York, 1961. Almost all Mongolian, Turkish and Tibetan names for ABSM in this book are explained fantastically: Albast (also Alboosty) from the Mongol alub (traveler), and usud - water. Thus, « One who moves over (lives in) wet places. Almas (also Almasty) Mongol ala (to kill), and mal (cattle). Thus, « One who can kill stock (cattle, animals) » etc etc. But in reality there is only an interchange of consonants b - m: Almas-Albas ! and Albast, Alboosty, also Almasty are the Turkish forms of Mongol Almas with an addition of suffix t/ty which only is explicable!

This content downloaded from 130.113.111.210 on Wed, 04 Nov 2015 04:15:38 UTC
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

Almas khara Tenguer - i.e. Almas the Black God, to whom one offered only eatable wild roots and meat of wild animals. Shugar and wine, milk and meat of domestic animals, pastry and farinaceous foods were forbidden for fear to offend the redoutable and touchy deity of mountain forests and highland prairies.

In shamanist legends of this region there are souls of the nacked hairy men helping hunter to pursue wild beasts in a hope to receive from him the thankfull offerings.

For the ethnologists, the origin of these ancient Darkhat shamanist creed and legends is of great value being a very old reminiscence on the existence of hairy and strange humanlike bipeds interpreted so originally in the primitive mentality of the ancient shamanists. We see in these old beliefs and legends the humanlike hairy creatures occasionally using hand stones and stocks, feeding only on wild roots and animals, suspicious to all unknown and unusual and therefore having an irresistible aversion for the food of nomadic cattle-breeders.

The so called Altai-Uriankhais, mongolised Turkish population in Kobdo and Bayan-olegei provinces of Western Mongolia conserving many old shamanist traditions and creeds in spite of their conversion into Buddhism consider the Almases as inferior deities of Nature like Faunus, Silenus, Silvanus and Pan of ancient Greeks and Romans. May be these Nature deities of the pre-Christian World of European Antiquity are for us the testimony of the existence of the hairy human-like beings deified in old times by the Ancients as do our Altai-Uriankhais with their Almases.

The Altai-Uriankhais name them respectfully Altain Sabdak, which means ' Lord of Altailand ». The word ' Sabdak » is Tibetan ' Sa-bdag ', i.e. Lord od Earth, Genius of Earth '. The lamas, preachers of Buddhism in xvii century composing Tibetan prayers in honour oh the local Mongol deities converted into the Religion of the Lord Buddha used this Tibetan expression ' Sa-bdag ' which eventually supplanted the old Mongol shamanist term ' Fajar-un ejen, Delekei-yin ejen ' - Lord of Earth, Genius of Nature.

The literary Mongolian possesses a special term for these Hairy Submen - ' Kümün görügesü ' - i.e. ' Men-Beasts, Wild Men ' We find this term in old Mongol manuscripts and xylographs, Mongol polyglot dictionaries, medicinal and pharmacological works with the drawings of these beings.

This content downloaded from 130.113.111.210 on Wed, 04 Nov 2015 04:15:38 UTC
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

Mr. I. T. Sanderson reproduced in his valuable book *Abominable Snowmen* two such drawings. He considers them to be extracted immediately from xviii - century Mongolian and later Chinese manuscripts and he transcribed the Mongolian name of the represented beings as Gin-Sung. Dr. I. T. Sanderson reproduced these drawings and explanations from the article of Czechoslovakian Dr. E. Vlček *Old Literary Evidence for the Existence of the Snowmen,* mentioned on the page 504 of his book. I have not a chance to see Dr. E. Vlček's article, but I must give some information about this « Old Literary Evidence ».

The drawings of Almas were photographed by Dr. Vlček from two wood-cutten editions of polyglot pharmacological work *Mirroir of Medicine* of the famous Mongol polymath Don-grub-rgyal-mchan (1792-1855). His Tibetan name given here in transcription we Mongols prononce as Dondubjaltsan or Donrubjaltsan. The full name of his pharmacological work in Tibetan is: Gso-byed bdud-rci'i ' khrul-med ńos- ' jin bzo-rig me-loń-du rnam-par šar-ba mjes-mchar mig-rgyan žes bya-ba bžugs-so. There are four xylographic editions of this famous work - Inner Mongolian edition, edition of the Tibetan Gumbum monastery, the Mongol edition of Pandita gueguen monastery reproducing the Tibetan Gumbum edition and the latest (1911-1912) Urga edition which reproduced the magnificent old manuscript with glosses in Tibetan, Mongolian, Manchu and Chinese from the Library of His Holiness Jebtzundamba viii, the last Living Buddha of Urga (1924).

The parallel Mongol-Manchu inscription on the above drawing no 42 of Dr. I.T. Sanderson's book between pp. 78-79 must be transcribed Mongolian as ' Kümün görügesü ' and Manchu as ' Suva nasin '. Late German orientalist Prof. E. Hauer misconceived this Manchu expression and wrongly translated in his Manchu-German Dictionary as ' Eisbär ' (2).

The upper drawing in Dr. I. T. Sanderson's book, reproduced from the more older Inner Mongolian xylographic edition has the same Mongol gloss and his Tibetan equivalent ' Mi-rgod '. In colloquial Tibetan ' Mi-rgod ' sounds ' migo ' or ' (migeu) and we find this spoken forms in the books and articles of Western authors about ABSMerie.

(2) Erich. Hauer, *Handwörterbuch der Mandschusprache*, II Lieferung, Tokio-Hamburg, 1955, p. 835.

This content downloaded from 130.113.111.210 on Wed, 04 Nov 2015 04:15:38 UTC
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

'Mi' signifies in Tibetan 'man' and 'rgod'-'wild, ferocious'. For instance, the same word 'rgod' is used in literary Tibetan for designate a wild yak: 'gyag-rgod' - colloquial 'yaggo', so we have the following correspondances:

Tib. 'gyag-rgod': Mong. 'buq-a görügesü' - 'wild ox'

Tib. 'mi-rgod': Mong. 'kümün görügesü' - wild man'.

Close link between these Tibetan and Mongolian expressions are not occasional. The lerned Mongol monks, authors of magnificent Tibetan-Mongolian dictionaries and creators of the langue of the ample Mongol Buddhist Literature were translating word for word many Tibetan terms and expressions and would not dare to identify the old Mongol term 'Almas' with the Tibetan 'Mi-rgod' (spoken 'migo') and preferred to translate it literally 'kümün görügesü', spoken 'khun goruosu». This spoken form is transcribed by Western authors as 'Hun guressu, Khun gorooss, khumchin (!) gorgosu and fantastically translated in the over mentionned book *Abominable Snowmen* as 'the Manlike One with extra long arms' instead of 'Man-Beast' or 'Wild Man'.

In Mongol version of the Tibetan Book of Tales there is another translation of the Tibetan term 'Mivgod': Doysin jerlig kümün'. Prof. Joseph Etienne Kowalewski in his famous *Dictionnaire Mongol-Russe-Français,* Kasan, 1849, p. 1871 had given both Tibetan and Mongolian expressions and translated them as 'Un homme sauvage, farouche'. The translation is litteral, but Prof. Kowalewski did not know that it was the special term for the hairy wild man.

The Western Mongols or Oirats, more known to the Europeans under the name of Kalmucks, for example the Torguts of Sinkiang and Mongolian People's Republic use the term 'kümün görügesü' in its spoken form 'kümün goruossu, kun goruossu' owing to activity of Dzaya pandita, the famous preacher of Buddism among them and inventor of kalmuck national characters

After these philological and ethnologic notions I permit myself to give some accounts about the existence of Almases in Mongolia.

I had collected informations about Almases since 1927 and

This content downloaded from 130.113.111.210 on Wed, 04 Nov 2015 04:15:38 UTC
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

losed some chances to obtain at least four corpses of Almases on account of rank ignorance of time-server persons who must equipe a trip.

During these 37 years the numerous informations in my disposal are showing an area of Almas habitation to be constantly shinking. Development of air and authomobile transport, of virgin and unused desert lands, increase of hunting and improvement of hunters' fire-arms changed the habitual area of wild animals of great deserts and steppes.

« Iron curtain » of Transmongolian railway now divided the wasteland of their habitation into « Western » and « Eastern » Gobi and for example the Gobi antelopes dare not now cross a strange reeking and repugnant steel snake with its constantly ringing and whistling wire of telegraph-posts.

The wild horses and camels and Almases retired to West and during the last fourty years the area of habitation of Almases very reduced. At present it is limited by the woodless mountainous region about of one thousand square kilometers on the juction of Kobdo and Bayan-olegei provinces. This very rugged wasteland rich in eatable roots and berries, mouflons and chamoises is now the last refuge of Almases in Mongolia.

After many attempts I had succeeded to send in autumn 1962 Mr. Damdin, one of the workers of our State Museum to make reconnaisances in this region and he returned back at December with a lot of very interesting informations which permitted me and him to organise at the autumn 1963 his second trip.

According to the data presented in the reports of Mr. Damdin, now retired 64 years old pensioner, who is preparing for his third trip to the Land of Almases, there are many eyewitnesses who met Almas during this last three years, including August 1963.

Among these eyewitnesses there are simple hunters and cattle-breeders, members of peasant cooperatives, men and women, students and teachers, formerly soldiers and officers of Army etc.

As the resultat of Mr. Damdins first trip, we have now in our disposal a skull of Almas (3) found near the Red Mountains of Almases in the district Bulgan somon Kobdo province.

---

(3) See note (4) ot page 192 (*N. of the Editor*).

This content downloaded from 130.113.111.210 on Wed, 04 Nov 2015 04:15:38 UTC
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

Mr. Choijoa, Mongol Torgut native of Sinkiang, formerly cattlebreeder and subsecuently worker of the Fruit-growing Experimental Station of Mongolian Academy of Sciences at Bulgan somon told a story of this great find:

— It was happened at about ten o'clock of 26-th June 1953. I remembered the time, day and month because this event had utterly surprised myself and was engraved on my heart.

At dawn of that day I went to search my lost camels in the direction of so called Red Mountain of Almases. It was a beautiful sunny morning when I dropped into the ravines. The wind spread a fragrance of highland flowers and herbs but I was in hurry to leave before a midday heat this labyrinth of canions and ravines. My camel climbed up and down in craggy defile. Suddenly I saw in the corner of secluded ravine under two small ammodendron bushs something of camel-colour. I approached and saw a hairy corpse of a robust humanlike creature dried and half-buried by sand. I had never seen such humanlike being covered by camel-colour brawnish-yellow short hairs and I recoiled, although in my native land in Sinkiang I had seen many dead men killed in a battle. But who was this strange dead thing — man or beast? I decided to return back and thoroughly examine it. I approached once more and looked down from my camel. The dead thing was not a bear or ape and at the same time it was not a man like Mongol and Kazakh or Chinese and Russian. The hair of its head were longer than on its body. The skin on groin and arm-pits was darkened and shrivelled like a hide of dead camel.

I have also examined a terrain near this body and found any rests of wears. Fear seized my heart. I remembered the old tales of Vetala-vampirs and thought I was to see before me one of them. And I hurried away. After my return to home I had informed our local administration and Mr. Chimeddorje, manager of Fruit-growing Station, but any-one gave attention on my account. And only after ten years I heard from a man, who came from Ulanbator specially for research about Almases that the dead body in question had a greta scientific value - told Mr. Choijoa.

Last year he had searched the dead-place of Almas and found

This content downloaded from 130.113.111.210 on Wed, 04 Nov 2015 04:15:38 UTC
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

only a skull. Sun and wind, snow and rain, carnivorous beasts and birds annihilated during ten years the corpse of Almas.

Mr Damdin who visited the place with Mr Chimeddorje and Choijoa succeeded to find several grayish hair from the head of Almas.

Mr. Chimeddorje, manager of Fruit-growing Station photographed the skull of Almas on its dead-place. If he had visited the terrain and would have protographed Almas's corpse ten years ago!

Mr Damdin has in his disposal the accounts of eyewitnesses who met Almas in 1960, 1961, 1962 and in August 1963.

One of those eyewitnesses Mr Batudorje, formerly officer of army and now the brigad-leader of the cattle-breeders cooperative in Altantsogutse somon of Bayan-olegei province met at the end of September in the mountains of Khuren tolgoi (Brawnhill) near the mountain lake Nogonnour (Green lake) a strange hairy biped and twice observed it imperceptibly by the field-glass hiding himself in the rocks at a distance about 80 - 100 meters.

Mr Batudorje met Almas near the place where many years ago his father also had met Altain sabdak.

Mr Damdin talked also to 64 years old kasakh woman Khumsai, member of the peasants cooperative « Red Down - in Tolbo somon Bayan-olegei province who had met Almas at midday on the third August 1963.

Khumsai and her husband were camping in the desert mountains near the mounts Bortu saridak. (It is near the place mentionned in my article *Almas - Mongolian relative of the Snowman* in « Contemporary Mongolia, 1958, no 5, pp. 34-38). The old woman was ascending a cleft to look after the goats and suddenly heard the flock to shy. Leant of cleaft she saw at distance about thirty meters a nacked hairy man very robust and strange who imperturbable looked upon her.

I hope in my following article give the results of our more better equiped third trip to the Land of Almases (4).

(4) The results of this third trip will be so more interesting as there is no proof that the skull found by Mr Choija is that of the Almas seen by him ten years before. The photographs taken by Mr. Chimeddorje, kindly sent to this Journal by Prof. Rinčen, show that the skull is of a modern mongol type, probably of a young woman (*N. of the Editor*).

This content downloaded from 130.113.111.210 on Wed, 04 Nov 2015 04:15:38 UTC
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions